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Statement: Navy releases test results on Red Hill Bulk Fuel Facility tanks

(Navy Region Hawaii) – Tested sections of the Navy's Red Hill underground fuel tanks are still twice as thick as the petroleum industry's closest comparable minimum standard for tank walls, according to a laboratory analysis report released recently to the State of Hawaii Department of Health and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The report provided results on the condition of 10 steel liner plate samples, also called coupons, that were cut from one of the 20 underground tanks. The Navy's preliminary assessment shows it validates the accuracy of earlier electromagnetic and ultrasonic scans the Navy did to assess the condition of a tank liner and determine areas in need of repair.

"That was the whole purpose of these tests, to evaluate the effectiveness of the earlier scanning data," said Mark Manfredi, Navy Region Hawaii's Red Hill Program Director. "The liner sample tests were not meant to evaluate the condition of the tank liner."

Contrary to previous non-Navy reports that offered premature and incorrect analysis of tank-wall thinning based on subjective observations and imprecise measurements, the tank's quarter-inch-thick steel liner samples were thicker than estimated by the non-Navy sources.

The Navy doubles an American Petroleum Institute's minimum thickness standard for above ground storage tanks as a best practice. After collaborating with third-party engineering experts, the Navy designated the higher minimum thickness for the whole tank surface, with the measurement for repair being obviously higher.

While some irregularities showed up in the different scans and tests run for the report, this confirms the Navy's decision to conduct multiple test, scans, and reviews to determine the tanks' condition. None of the variations in the steel samples tested would have resulted in any fuel leaking, according to Manfredi.

Although the laboratory testing largely confirmed its predictions, the Navy continues working with industry experts to evaluate cutting-edge technologies and procedures to improve the ability to "see" the backside of the reinforced concrete tanks' steel liner to further protect the environment and drinking water.

The Navy is actively engaged in monitoring and inspecting sections of the tanks to ensure it identifies potential issues early and has multiple systems that inspect, monitor and evaluate all aspects of the Red Hill fuel facility system. After nearly 75 years in service, no more than 1 to 2 percent of each tank's surface area requires repair.

The Navy continues to work with the EPA and Health Department under an Administrative Order on Consent to improve the facility and protect the environment. Since 2006, the Defense Department has invested more than $260 million in Red Hill, and modernization continues in oversight, technology, operating procedures and the means to protect our shared drinking water. Public records confirm that all drinking water near Red Hill remains safe, and the Navy is committed to keeping it safe. Red Hill continues to be a national strategic asset that provides power for peace, stability, humanitarian assistance and continued prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.

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